



H1N1 Vaccinations

Frequently Asked Questions

The H1N1 vaccine is available now, but is it safe?

The FDA approved the vaccine on Sept. 15, 2009, after clinical trials on volunteers throughout the nation. The H1N1 vaccine underwent the same FDA manufacturing oversight, product quality testing and lot release procedure that apply to seasonal flu vaccines. For details on H1N1 safety testing and ingredients, visit the Vaccine Safety page at www.phd1.idaho.gov.

Does the medical community plan to get vaccinated?

It's impossible to answer for everyone in the medical community, but many people in the healthcare field, including doctors, nurses and emergency response workers, have contacted PHD to find out when they can get their vaccinations and when the vaccine will be available to their children.

"Vaccines are the best way to protect yourself and your family," says Dr. Christine Hahn, M.D. and Idaho State Epidemiologist. "We encourage people to take advantage of the H1N1 vaccine as it becomes more widely available. I have two children--a 3-year-old and a 5-year-old--and I plan on vaccinating them as soon as the vaccine is readily available in my area."

When will the vaccine be available in the schools?

Teams of nurses from Panhandle Health District will provide the vaccine to students with parent approval in 96 public and private schools in the five northern counties starting Oct. 19 and continuing through the first week in December. Schools will notify parents of the date the vaccinations will be given to their students. Vaccinations will start with the youngest students. Students will bring home permission slips that need a parent's signature for the vaccination. Parents, siblings and other family members may get their vaccinations at the same time as their student based on vaccine availability. Vaccinations are voluntary.



Why are the vaccinations being given in the schools?

The H1N1 virus has hit the age group under 25 in the greatest numbers. Most people in that group are in schools—group settings—where the virus spreads easily and quickly. Providing the vaccine in schools is the most efficient way to get the vaccine to large numbers of children and reduce the rate of spread.

Should we get the flu mist or the flu shot?

Both are equally effective.

The nasal flu mist is made with a weakened live virus that contains no preservatives. It's approved for healthy people from age 2 through age 49. The virus used in the vaccine is weakened so it won't cause illness. Based on vaccine availability, PHD plans to give eligible children younger than 10 flu mist unless parents request otherwise.

The vaccine in the flu shot is made with a killed virus. Some of the H1N1 flu shot vaccine stored in larger quantities contains a preservative to keep it germ-free. Based on clinical trials of the vaccine, the FDA has approved the vaccine as safe. The flu shot is appropriate for most healthy people over the age of 6 months and people with weakened immune systems. However, if you have health problems, it makes good sense to ask your doctor if the vaccine is right for you.

Are there side effects from the vaccine?

Anyone with a life-threatening allergy to eggs or any other substance in the vaccine should not get the vaccination. Vaccine ingredients are listed at www.flu.gov or the Vaccine Safety page at www.phd1.idaho.gov.

Reactions to the H1N1 vaccine are similar to those of the seasonal flu vaccine. Severe reactions are very rare.

Reactions to the flu shot can include soreness, redness, tenderness or swelling where the shot was given, fainting, headaches, muscle aches, fever and/or nausea. These reactions usually begin soon after the shot and last a day or two if they occur.

Reactions to the nasal flu mist can include a runny nose, congestion, cough, fever, headaches, muscle aches, wheezing, stomach ache and vomiting or diarrhea.

I think I've had the flu. Do I need the vaccine?

Unless you underwent an expensive medical test to confirm H1N1, you can't be sure you were infected with the H1N1 virus. The vaccine is extra protection. A seasonal flu shot is also recommended.

Can I get both vaccines at the same time?

You can get both flu shots at the same time but not both nasal flu mists. The seasonal flu mist and H1N1 flu mist should be taken 30 days apart.

The Panhandle Health District provides H1N1 information and updates of the situation in the five northern counties on its website: www.phd1.idaho.gov. PHD's hotline number is tollfree (866) 528-3501. The hotline will take calls starting Tuesday, Oct. 13, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays through Fridays. The PHD information line at (208) 415-5299 offers a recording of up-to-date H1N1 information for our area and links to the hotline if it's needed.